

Thirty Minutes or Less

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

Thirty Minutes or Less is a series which explores how an intimate relationship with a midwestern town can influence someone in search of a sense of agency and responsibility. Max Stephens, a notorious burnout, finds himself forced to find some sense of independence after his mother cuts him off financially. Taking a job at Mo Pizza No Problems as a delivery driver, an occupation he initially rejects, Max finds himself thrown into an entirely new environment, both in his new workplace and in the entire community of Lenape. Through his job, he discovers the beautiful nuances of the town, and through the relationship he forms with it, discovers a sense of responsibility and servitude. This newfound maturity, however, comes at a cost, at times.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof. Rani Crowe for offering incredibly helpful advice and resources throughout this project. If not for her guidance, this project would not have been half of what it is. I would also like to acknowledge all my other professors during my four years at Ball State, for without all their guidance as well I would not be half the man I am today.

I would also like to thank my mom and dad, Carolyn and Bob, and my sister Adia, as well as Justice, Hayden, and Elaine for their support during this project, and, of course, the entire Muncie community for its influence on not only this project, but myself.

Process Analysis Statement

An Honors thesis is the capstone of the Honors experience. To me, this meant more than simply a summation of my technical knowledge gained from my telecommunications classes, but a project I wished to encapsulate my entire college experience, warts and all. For three years, starting in the early weeks of my sophomore year of college, I delivered pizza full time at Cousin Vinny's Pizza, a small, delivery-oriented pizza place that is open until the early hours of the morning. Working so closely with the diverse community of Muncie was just a transformative experience for me as college itself, and this inspired what eventually mutated into *Thirty Minutes or Less*. In its infancy, this project encountered a wealth of roadblocks, each with a lesson that taught me how to be a better writer. This project pushed me to be as creative and intelligent as I could in my labors to adapt and dramatize my actual experiences to a screen-worthy idea that could pose some value to me as I enter the professional world.

Before submitting my proposal, I had quite lofty hopes for this project. I wanted to write a feature-length script from start to finish, encouraged to take on a larger writing project after receiving high praise among my peers for a short film entitled *Life Cycles*. In Prof. Crowe and my first meeting, she advised me to lower my expectations considerably; even a seasoned writer would have difficulty making a screen-worthy film in a semester's time. Instead, we opted to write treatments, or detailed summaries, of an entire eight-episode web series, with episodes ranging from ten to twenty minutes in length, completed scripts for at least six episodes, and a visual proof of concept. Even this, as I quickly found, posed to be too much for me to undertake. In our second meeting of the semester, Prof. Crowe laid out two possible end products for the project; either we try to write six first drafts and stay true to the proposal, or put all our effort into a single, polished pilot script. After reviewing resources through the Writer's Guild of America and Sundance Film Festival's episodic entry qualifications, we decided to write a series bible, which contains a polished first draft script, treatments for each episode, a personal and a thematic statement, and demographics information. A series bible has industry value and allows for the creator to focus on mapping out the theme and substantial value of their creation, rather than writing episodes that will never see the

light of day. By using this format rather than my proposed goals, Prof. Crowe and I found the project to be much more meaningful, both in creativity and realistic value.

When I initially sat down to begin my project, I had a general idea of what I wanted to write but was absolutely lost on how to translate it into words. When I wrote my previous scripts, they were done in one sitting in the early hours of the morning, often produced with entirely no forethought whatsoever. This method, however, proved entirely unsuccessful in my early attempts to write the pilot for *Thirty Minutes or Less*. So, rather than sit down and try to write it from scratch, Prof. Crowe advised me to start with treatments for each episode, and to research formatting and presentation by watching television series pilots and reading scripts. As per her suggestion, I watched the pilots of *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, *Taxi*, and *Brooklyn 99*, as well as *Trailer Park Boys* and *New Girl*, shows which I decided to research based upon personal interest. Other shows I researched purely based on personal interest were *Rick & Morty* and *Bojack Horseman*, eventually using *Rick & Morty* co-creator Dan Harmon's Circle Theory of Story to plan the plots of each episode (Myers, 2018). Dan Harmon's Circle Theory of Story, based off Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey plot structure, is circular and comprised of eight plot points (Myers, 2018):

1. A character is in a comfort zone,
2. but they want something.
3. They enter an unfamiliar situation,
4. adapt to it,
5. and get what they wanted,
6. but pay a heavy price for it.
7. They return to their familiar situation,
8. having changed.

This structure was especially useful because, in most episodes, Max is on a delivery and literally leaving the comfort zone of the store to enter the unfamiliar world of Lenape. Sometimes, however, this entrance into the unknown is not a literal movement of place, but an emotional or psychological movement into the unfamiliar. I also reviewed a handful of scripts during my research, especially relying on *Eighth Grade* and the pilot of *The Office* for ideas on how to format the sections of script that included

a handheld camera, which allowed me to easily convey the character's feelings without breaking the fourth wall. These resources, paired with many hours spent curled up with a laptop and a notebook, led to the creation of the series bible that follows.

As I mentioned before, this project was inspired by my actual experiences as a pizza driver for three years in Muncie whilst I was attending college full-time. When I started, I was, like Max, naive and a bit of a burnout, and forced to quickly adapt to the Muncie community for my own safety and financial security. Though I took my experiences to the extreme for dramatic effect, many of the events in *Thirty Minutes or Less* are based on actual events in my life. Early in my delivery career I was chased out of someone's driveway at shotgunpoint, and I've had weapons pulled on me three other times, inspiring me to write episode five. There were also many nights I spent delivering extremely late orders due to understaffing and poor management, which also inspired this episode. I also suffered with sleep issues for the better part of my delivery career; I was working and going to school full-time and often sleeping only a few hours each night, making nodding off while delivering an unfortunately common occurrence. This inspired me to write episode seven, which highlights the dangers a young person can encounter when reaching adulthood and trying to balance their responsibilities. I also based many episodes on ideas I had relating to peculiar things I observed while delivering. Throughout the year, though I noticed the highest concentration in the early fall, bicyclists litter Muncie streets day and night, often travelling in small packs. In my imagination, they were pods of "bikers," affiliated to gangs that either protected or wreaked havoc on the city, which became the central idea while writing episodes three and eight. I also had a very awkward training day with the former boss of the pizza place who had a history of throwing temper tantrums, so I tried to incorporate that experience into the plot of the second episode as well. Lastly, though unrelated to my experiences, the name of the town Lenape is a nod at the city of Muncie itself, taken from the Lenni Lenape tribe that resided in Delaware County before the city was founded.

In addition to basing a large portion of the episodic plots on my actual life experiences, nearly all the characters in *Thirty Minutes or Less* are based on actual people I interacted with. Max, unsurprisingly, is loosely based on myself, as well as

Zeke, though his character initially came about as a plot device and did not fully manifest until the end of the project. I knew from the onset of the project that I wanted to incorporate a handheld camera as a plot device, and Zeke was created to make the use of the camera logical whilst maintaining Max's character, rather than making Max seem extremely self-absorbed, recording and documenting his life at all times. At first, Zeke's character was a challenge to incorporate naturally into the plotline, because he was, in my mind, a fabricated character solely created to convey Max's story. It wasn't until the end of the project that I found that Zeke was, in fact, my biggest saving grace for creating pacing and believability in Max's plotline. Basing him off the positive characteristics I see in myself and giving him a clear goal in the pilot, most episodes include a subplot relating to Zeke, which helped the flow of the series, as well as adding dimension to some episodes that lacked depth. Aside from Max and Zeke, Stu, as I've already mentioned, is based on real people; not just the ex-manager that trained me, but also the old owner of the pizza place I work at, as well as the previous general manager. Sam and Jesus are also based on actual ex-managers, their personalities written to reflect their actual personalities. Yuri and Tommy are also based on delivery drivers I work with, though quite loosely. Each Lenape resident is loosely based on actual Muncie residents I interacted with as well, though their personalities are entirely fabricated. Of course, each of these character's names and core identities are fictional in order to avoid potential slander or libel lawsuits.

Though this project has presented a wealth of challenges along the way, it has proven to be extremely rewarding as well. When I first approached Prof. Crowe last fall with the idea to write a production-worthy piece that encapsulated my transformative college experience, I had no idea the project itself would be equally catalytic. I embarked on this project almost solely from encouragement from my peers on a poorly written, disorganized short film, believing I had the skill and creativity to plan and write a screen-worthy film in just a few months. Now, after realizing my original goal was next to impossible, I have something noteworthy to show for myself; a series that I can take with me into the professional world and begin my career working in video production. I learned that producing any piece of thought-out writing, let alone something producible,

is quite a feat, and reaching the end of this project assures me that I have potential to be a screenwriter in the professional world.

References

Myers, S. (2018, May 10). *Dan Harmon, The Hero's Journey, and the Circle Theory of Story*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@scottdistillery/dan-harmon-the-heros-journey-and-the-circle-theory-of-story-b64bb77d6976>

Thirty Minutes or Less

Series logline: A lazy college student must assimilate with the unfamiliar town of Lenape and win his coworkers' approval after his mother cuts him off.

Episode Treatments

1.) "Pilot"

Max Hendricks, a lazy college slacker, encounters a financial crisis when his mother cuts him off for being a weed-smoking slacker on her dime. His roommate, a studious video production student named Zeke Stephens, offers to help on the condition he can record the experience for a semester-long project. Max, after letting every other opportunity slip through his hands, gets a job at Mo Pizza No Problems, a job which he initially rejects.

2.) "Training Day"

Max and Zeke ride along with Stu, the owner of Mo Pizza No Problems, for Max's training day. They get off to a rough start; Stu is apprehensive because he must sacrifice his valued privacy, especially with Zeke's camera in his face. After some small talk, Stu opens up and reveals his die-hard beliefs in extremely far-fetched conspiracy theories in between deliveries, where Max learns how to interact with different types of Lenape residents. In their efforts to win his approval, Max and Zeke end up convincing Stu they also believe in his ridiculous ideas, and the episode resolves with Stu announcing his approval of the pair to the rest of the employees before throwing a temper tantrum and storming out.

3.) "Biker Gang"

Now that Max has earned Stu's approval and secured the job, he aims to earn the approval of the other drivers, who reject him due to his constrained worldview. He gets sent on a delivery to a sketching part of town and leaves without a fuss in an effort to impress his coworkers. Zeke, however, decides to stay behind so he can interview the other drivers for his project, especially Yuri, the strong and silent Slavic driver. On

his run, Max is charged by a crazed man on a bicycle, rescued just in time by another man on a much nicer bicycle. His rescuer explains that there are two rival “biker gangs” in Lenape; the “Meth-chines,” addicts who ride around the town committing crimes, and the “Cyclopes,” a neighborhood watch, of sorts, comprised of recovered addicts. The Cyclops are led by a man named Boris, who Max’s savior reveres, for he was once an alcoholic who, after getting back on his feet and opening a bike shop, offers free bikes to addicts in recovery in exchange for them joining the Cyclopes and keeping Lenape safe. This journey makes Max’s delivery extremely late, enraging the customer and subsequently Sam, the general manager. The other drivers, on the other hand, find Max’s encounter amusing and start to accept him as well. Yuri, who Zeke has been attempting to interview throughout the ordeal to no avail, is especially accepting of Max and reveals to him that Boris is his long-lost best friend who he immigrated to America with and that he finds peace knowing his friend has found his place in the world.

4.) “*Thanks for the Tip*”

For the better part of Max’s time at Mo Pizza No Problems, he has opted to stay in the store rather than ride along with Max in order to get an inside perspective of the pizza industry. After pestering every driver and insider he finally decides to prey on Sam, who blows up on him. In order to get him out of her hair, she suggests he ride along with Max on his next run and assigns him a run outside the delivery radius in a sketchy area. Max, in an effort to win back her approval after his screw-up last episode, takes the run without question and drags the whiney Zeke along with him. During their drive, Zeke throws a fit about how he can’t get any good content if he’s not in the store where his story is. Max dismisses this notion, assuring him that the road is much more exciting and documentary worthy. When they pull up to the address, Max is disheartened to see the dilapidated house assuming he won’t get a tip. The customer, an older man in dirty and ragged clothes, jogs up to meet him and greets him with extreme gratitude. As it turns out, the man has recently inherited his childhood home from his deceased mother and is trying to make it livable for his family, who is currently crammed into a rickety camper in the backyard. Thankful for Max’s kindness for going out of his way, he gives him an exuberant tip, which he tries to refuse. The man pushes

the money back to Max, insisting he keep it, or if he really felt compelled to give it back, to pay it forward. Zeke, standing back and filming the entire ordeal, seems to have a change of heart on the drive back. Now, he has found his story; not the pizza drivers, but the customers, each with their own, unique story, begging to be told. The interaction also changes Max, who now has a newfound appreciation for his job, realizing the positive impact he has on people. When they return to the store, Sam is happy to find that Zeke is no longer aiming to pester her or the other workers, and especially accepting of Max's new eagerness. After his shift Max goes on a beer run to the local supermarket and uses the man's tip to pay for an elderly woman's groceries when her card gets declined, symbolizing his inherent change of heart from lazy to caring.

5.) "Hard Knock Life"

Max is finally beginning to find a groove at Mo Pizza No Problems; he's performing well, has a good relationship with the other drivers, and continues to impress Sam. All this is put to the test when Stu, in an effort to avoid his ex-wife while she moves out of their house, arrives and attempts to manage the store on top of Sam, effectively jamming the workflow. He routes drivers with no regard for proximity and even puts the wrong address on some orders, making them late and upsetting the customers. Zeke, however, is enjoying the kerfuffle because it makes for incredible content for his project. On his last run, an extremely late delivery to a house essentially situated in the middle of nowhere, Max and Zeke end up getting robbed of all their valuables, including Max's work money and Zeke's camera. This causes Sam to blow up on Stu and forces him to leave so she can get the store operating properly again. She sends home Max and Zeke, who begin to feel sorry for themselves on their way home before spying Stu sitting in his car crying behind the store, causing them to reconsider exactly how dire their situation truly is.

6.) "Jerry Garcia Pizza"

On a slow night, Max stands around with the veteran drivers, listening to their stories of wild deliveries. Zeke gets tired of this and decides to follow Tommy, a middle-aged drug dealer who acts and somehow looks like he's in his mid-twenties, and Jesus,

the old hippie manager, as they dart into the back. He finds them huddled shoulder-to-shoulder with their backs turned, but they notice him and shoo him away before he can figure out what they're up to. Zeke begrudgingly walks back to the front and rejoins the circle and the pair slunk out behind him. Max, completely unaware of the interaction that just transpired, decides to go to the back and see if he can find any food. He finds a glorious, steaming cheese pizza covered in fresh mushrooms and devours most of it before he hears the phones ring and runs to the front to help. Max and Zeke head out on a delivery, and Max begins to feel sick to his stomach as he pulls up to the address, barely keeping his cool as his vision distorts while he carries out the transaction. He has Zeke drive him back to the store, running into the back and locking himself in the bathroom in an attempt to calm himself down. Zeke follows after him but stops when he finds Jesus and Tommy standing in the same spot as before, arguing exaggeratedly. He pushes into their conversation, finding that they're arguing over who ate the magic mushroom pizza Jesus bought off Tommy. Meanwhile, Max is having a full-blown panic attack in the bathroom as the walls breath aggressively and begin to swallow him. He bursts out of the bathroom screaming just as the argument between Jesus, Tommy and Zeke starts to escalate. Tommy and Zeke take the opportunity to slunk away, leaving Jesus to comfort the overly emotional Max. Max, sensing Jesus' residual anger, begins frantically apologizing, but Jesus responds calmly, informing Max that he ate psychedelic mushrooms and is currently tripping. Max begins to panic, but Jesus talks him down and helps him maintain his calm by teaching him to stretch pizzas. Stu enters, expecting to work inside with Jesus, but, due to Max's altered mind state and gift at stretching perfect doughs, ends up delivering. On the road, Stu finds the customers to be extremely rude and ends up leaving mid-shift to see his estranged mother in a vague attempt to find meaning in his life. At the end of the night, Max is still quite intoxicated and Jesus suggests he let Zeke drive him home. On their drive, Max thanks Zeke for being such a caring friend and always being there for him, being overly honest due to the drugs. This causes Zeke to tear up as he realizes that in his pursuit of content for his project, he, at times, has forgotten to show Max gratitude.

7.) “Noddy Boy”

Max hasn't been sleeping much because he's having trouble balancing working and going to school full time, resulting in him nodding off on runs. He tries to wake himself using various methods, like rolling the windows down, turning the music up, and screaming along. All these efforts prove ineffective, however, and he resorts to conversing with Zeke to keep himself awake. When this also fails, Zeke takes pity on Max and offers to drive back to the store so Max can take a power nap. Max, however, doesn't wake up, so Zeke carries out the rest of his shift for him, finding how difficult Max's job really was. After a night of verbal abuse from customers and tense interactions with other drivers, Zeke takes Max home with a newfound appreciation for his roommate. He also, once again, has a change of heart regarding his project, deciding to focus the story on Max himself and his struggles.

8.) “Ice, Ice, Baby”

Max gets called in on his snowy day off because he wants to continue to impress management. Zeke begrudgingly follows, knowing the atrocious weather could make for some good content. On a run, he hits a sheet of black ice and launches his car into a snowbank, totaling it and obliterating his phone. Against Zeke's suggestion, Max decides to walk the pizza the rest of the way so he can borrow the customer's phone and call for help, leaving Zeke with no option but to follow. On their journey, though, Max collapses, clutching the pizza for warmth. When he comes too, he's slung over the shoulder of a large, muscular man riding a bicycle: Boris. As his vision is restored, he finds not only has he been saved, but a team of bicyclists are towing his totaled car with Zeke steering it from the driver's seat. As it turns out, the man from episode three had seen Max crash and gotten Boris and a handful of gang members to rescue Max and help him complete his run. They drop the pair back off at the store and let Max know they'll be in contact in a few weeks when Boris repairs his car. Max is initially resistant, claiming it makes him uncomfortable to accept so much kindness without repayment. They finally settle once Boris reminds him that, though his job, he helps the community, which is more than enough repayment in his eyes. Max finally goes inside and explains the entire scenario to Sam, anticipating to be let go. To his surprise, however, Sam

offers him a promotion to assistant manager, revealing that she and Stu had been considering it for some time. He accepts, on the condition he can still deliver from time to time once his car is repaired. The next morning while Max and Zeke eat breakfast, Max phones his mother to inform her of his predicament. She reacts as many parents would, urging him to quit and find a better opportunity rather than put himself in danger. Max reacts calmly, reminding her that she placed this responsibility on him and informing her that he now feels that sense of responsibility for himself, and regardless of her pleas he will continue to work at Mo Pizza No Problems. After the phone call concludes, Zeke tells Max he has some potentially exciting news: the professor loved his project! In fact, he loved it so much, he demands more, and Zeke asks to continue filming him. Before he is even able to finish the request, though, Max eagerly agrees, excited to help his friend and have his journey documented.

Personal Statement

Shortly after arriving at college in the fall of 2016, finally breaking free from my strict parents' watchful eyes, I became much like Max; a slacker who only cared about himself. While college itself has been a transformative experience, the past four years of my life were also deeply influenced by my time delivering for a small pizza shop in the small, eccentric, and eclectic city of Muncie. Some moments were scary, like being held at gunpoint, and others touching, like being treated with the utmost kindness by people in obviously dire situations. Most of all, though, my overwhelming feeling in this line of work was that everyone has a story; seldom did I go an entire shift without encountering a character. Delivering also pushed me to my limits, the long lonely nights forcing me to really get to know myself and my weaknesses. I started the job as a naive college sophomore and delivering has played a huge role in shaping me into the person I am today. In my three years as a delivery driver I formed an intimate relationship with the town of Muncie and the people within it and felt deeply inspired to write a series that reflected that relationship and give my perspective. Now, with my delivery days behind me, I feel this is the perfect time to encapsulate these experiences in a comedic tone and share them with the world. While I'm no longer out in the Muncie community making

deliveries these experiences are fresh in my mind, so now seems like the perfect time to put them into writing.

Thematic Statement

The overarching theme of this series explores how an intimate relationship with a midwestern town can influence a young man when he is forced to quickly find a sense of responsibility. Max begins the series as a disconnected burnout, comfortable living in his own bubble, only to find it burst open when his mother pulls his financial plug. In the first half of the series, he finds himself scrambling to assimilate, both with his coworkers and the community of Lenape, subsequently building his sense of responsibility as he grows to know the community that surrounds him. This newfound sense of responsibility is put to the test in episode five after he endures a grueling night filled with enraged customers, and his newfound appreciation for the townsfolk of Lenape is also put to the test when he is robbed blind by a posse of smooth talking locals. Motivated by both his need for the job and his change of heart, Max is resilient and continues to deliver, exposing both the positive and negative effects of his newfound responsibility. The season finale aims to symbolize a potential effect of this theme, depicting the response of a grateful community to Max after it brings out his caring nature and inert responsibility.

Demographic Information

This series is primarily aimed at working-class, college-educated men ages eighteen to thirty, because the series follows a college student whose family income has supported him but is forced to enter the workforce earlier than expected because his mother cuts him off. Additionally, the series is set in Midwest America, so this geographical demographic would also likely find more resonance in the series. The series also intentionally lacks any romantic content to be all-inclusive in the realm of gender and sexuality.

Thirty Minutes or Less

"Pilot"

Written by

Matt Massengale

Edited by

Rani Crowe

FADE IN:

INT. MESSY RENTAL HOUSE LIVING ROOM - RAINY DAY

MAX, a lazy, self-centered college student, sits watching television on the couch with one hand halfway tucked in his pants and the other clutching a cola. Empty beer cans, pizza boxes, and fast food bags cover the rickety coffee table MAX has his feet propped up on, with a large, dirty bong as the centerpiece. RAIN falls outside.

Suddenly, there is a KNOCK on the door. MAX sluggishly rises to get it. There is another, LOUDER KNOCK.

MAX
I'm coming! Geez.

MAX opens the door. MIKE, a middle-aged pizza delivery driver, stands on the porch drenched.

MIKE
Howdy, your total's sixteen-nineteen.

MAX, unresponsively, thumbs through his wallet.

MAX
Uh, I don't have enough cash on me. Can I
pay with card?

MIKE
(huffs)
Sure. You got a phone handy?

MAX
(patting his pockets)
Nah, sorry.

MIKE
Alright. Let me grab mine from my car then.

MIKE aggravatedly runs back to his car and returns with his phone, already calling the store. MAX stands in the doorway biting a hangnail impatiently.

MIKE

It'll be just a second, they put me on hold.

MAX

Okee doke... Damn, it's really rainin', huh?

MIKE

Mhm.

MAX

Sucks to be you, man.

MIKE shoots MAX a dirty glance, which he seems to completely disregard.

MIKE

Card?

MAX

Oh, yeah, here.

MAX hands him his debit card.

MIKE

(into phone)

Yeah, hey, it's MIKE. I'm over here onnnn-

(checks boxes in bag)

Order number eighty-four. They wanna pay with card... four-oh-one-one nine-nine-one-eight six-nine-five-nine four-eight-nine-two. Oh four, twenty-five. One hundred...

Alright.

(to MAX)

They said it was declined.

MAX

That can't be right. Can you try it again?

MIKE

They already hung up, sorry.

MAX

Oh, uh, well... Give me a minute, I'm sure it's here somewhere.

EXT. RENTAL HOUSE - CONT.

MAX slams the door in MIKE's face. MIKE rubs his temple standing on the stoop, now dripping from the rain.

A silver sedan pulls into the driveway and ZEKE, a hardworking, though somewhat stubborn college student, and MAX's roommate, gets out of the car.

ZEKE
(calling to MIKE)
Hey, he keeping you waiting?

MIKE
Yup.

ZEKE shakes his head, grabs his camera bag from the back seat and jogs up to the stoop. He hands MIKE two twenties.

ZEKE
I'm so sorry, here, keep the change.

MIKE
Thanks.

MIKE hands ZEKE the pizzas and runs back to his car as MAX opens the door with a jar full of coin change and a few scratch-off lottery tickets.

ZEKE
(pushing past MAX)
The fuck is wrong with you, dude?

MAX
What?

INT. MESSY RENTAL HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONT.

ZEKE pushes past MAX and sets the fresh pizza on a pile of stale pizza boxes on the coffee table. He puts his hands on his hips and blocks MAX from sitting back down on the couch. The pair shuffle back and forth as MAX tries to walk around him.

ZEKE

It's pouring, did you not think to let the man in?

MAX

I'm not letting some stranger into our house-

ZEKE

He's not a stranger, he's the fucking pizza guy! He just wants to get in, do his job, and get the fuck out.

MAX gives up on trying to push past ZEKE and crosses his arms.

MAX

Well maybe if he didn't wanna stand out in the rain he'd pick a different profession.

ZEKE

Dude, come on, can you think of anyone besides yourself?

MAX

Of course I can!

ZEKE

Yeah, whatever. You owe me forty bucks. And you're sharing.

MAX

FORTY!?! It wasn't even twenty to begin with.

ZEKE

I tipped him.

MAX

Ugh, why?

ZEKE

Because it's what you do? That's their
income you dipass.

MAX

Ehhhh, I dunno.

ZEKE shakes his head and sits down on the couch. He starts taking
his camera out of the bag and assembling it.

ZEKE

Tsk, whaaatever... So, how was your day?

MAX

Eh, it's been alright, just skipped class
n' chilled. What about you?

ZEKE

Fucking. Stressful.

MAX

Yeah?

ZEKE

Yeah, Dr. Wallace assigned a stupid fucking
semester long video assignment.

MAX

Fuck, man... That's ass.

ZEKE

Yeah, I'm aware. I've got no fucking clue
what to do.

MAX

Damn... I guess you can help yourself to
some pizza, maybe that'll help, somehow.
I'm gonna call my mom and see what's up
with my card, it got declined.

ZEKE

Aight.

MAX walks out of the room. ZEKE turns on his camera and opens the pizza box, taking a slice and munching on it. The perspective flips to that of ZEKE's camera.

MAX
(O.S.)

What do you mean!?! No, that's not-

ZEKE hops up and quickly turns down the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - CONT.

The hallway is dark, with a single sliver of light peeking out from an open door at the end. ZEKE hurriedly tiptoes up to the crack and the camera peers into MAX's bedroom.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - CONT.

MAX is pacing back and forth anxiously with a phone pressed to his ear. The room is a disaster, the trash can overflowing and the floor almost entirely covered in dirty clothes.

MAX
That doesn't prove anything, mom, come on!

MAX turns and sees ZEKE filming him and covers the phone.

MAX
(whispering)
Fucking stop it, man... Huh?

ZEKE pushes into the room and completely disregards MAX's pleas.

MAX
Oh geez, mom, no, I didn't- I'm sorry...
Okay... Love you too. Bye... Fuck.

ZEKE
(O.S.)
What's goin' on?

MAX

Fuck off, Zeke. I'm serious, get that
camera out of my face.

ZEKE

(O.S.)

Okay, okay, fine, but seriously, what's up?

ZEKE turns off the camera. MAX sits down on his unmade bed
forcefully, hanging his head in his hands.

MAX

My mom fucking cut me off.

ZEKE

What do you mean she cut you off?

MAX

She cut me off! No more money, told me that
if I wanted to "waste my time skipping
class and smoking grass" I could do it with
my own money.

ZEKE

That's a big oof there, bud.

MAX

Yeah... I don't know what to do...

ZEKE

Uhh, get a job? Duh.

MAX looks up at ZEKE with tears in his eyes.

MAX

I've... I've never had a job...

ZEKE

Oh, uh... Tell you what, if you let me film
you for my project, we can forget that
forty. And I'll help you find a job.

MAX

Really? Tha-

ZEKE

And by help I mean drive you to places and loan you some clothes
so you don't walk in there looking like a goon.

MAX

Oh... What's wrong with my clothes?

ZEKE

You can't walk into an interview in jeans, Max, let alone ripped
jeans. Plus the only button you own has Coronas on it.

MAX

Oh... Do you really have to go that all out?

ZEKE

(eyeing him up and down)

Yeah... Trust me, you're gonna need all the help you can get.

MAX

Okay... Yeah. Thanks...

They shake hands to seal the deal, which ZEKE uses to pull MAX
onto his feet and give him a friendly hug.

LENAPE BUSINESSES MONTAGE - DAY

INT. MAX'S HOUSE

ZEKE powers on his camera, peering into the lens. MAX walks out
of his room wearing ZEKE's best suit, trying his best to appear
comfortable. ZEKE turns the camera back towards himself, giving
him a thumbs up with a reassuring grin.

EXT. BUSY LENAPE STREET

A dashboard camera rig captures the pair in transit. ZEKE drives
MAX around Lenape in his clean sedan to apply to jobs. MAX holds
a manilla envelope with copies of his resume.

EXT. THOMPSON'S LOCOMOTIVE FACTORY

ZEKE pulls into the parking lot of the large train factory. A
handful of weathered FACTORY WORKERS sit at a collection of
picnic tables nearby smoking cigarettes. MAX hops out of the car
and starts toward the door. He tries to turn back, but ZEKE,
recording him with his camera, nods and gives him a thumbs up.
Max nods, does an about-face and continues his march toward the
factory entrance.

INT. THOMPSON'S LOCOMOTIVE FACTORY

MAX enters the bleak factory lobby. A handful of weathered men and women sit waiting, in metal chairs. The SECRETARY, a gruff middle-aged woman, sits at a desk on the far end of the room. He approaches and, wordlessly, she points to a sign on her desk reading "all applicants subject to mandatory drug testing." MAX smiles, nods and leaves.

EXT. WALLET-SAVER SUPERCENTER

ZEKE pulls into the parking lot of a massive supercenter. MAX hurriedly exits the car and approaches the building with an air of professionalism. ZEKE records him from his car.

INT. WALLET-SAVER SUPERCENTER MANAGER'S OFFICE

MAX sits uncomfortably in a chair across from a large wooden desk. Behind the desk is an even bigger man, the MANAGER. He scowls at MAX suspiciously, who nervously tries to maintain eye contact. The MANAGER smiles and hands MAX a pile of paperwork, shakes his hand and shoves him out of the office.

END MONTAGE.**EXT. WALLET-SAVER SUPERCENTER - DAY**

ZEKE is sitting in his car listening to talk radio when MAX, beaming with joy, finally returns with his pile of papers. ZEKE turns the radio off as MAX steps into the car.

MAX

I got the job! Granted, damn near anyone can get a job here, but
I start this weekend at twelve an hour.

ZEKE

That's awesome! What's all that stuff?

MAX

Oh, it's all the onboarding documents!

MAX hands the stack of papers to ZEKE, who thumbs through them.

MAX

I'm supposed to read them all before I start, buuuut I dunno.
Sounds like a lot of work.

ZEKE

You really should, this is important stuff. Look here, says their computer system will auto-fire you if you're late more than once.

MAX

Pshh... I'll be fine.

ZEKE

When was the last time you made it to a class on time?

MAX

...high school...

ZEKE

Exactly. Wallet-Saver don't fuck around, that's why they CAN hire anyone. Because they fire anyone who can't meet their standards.

MAX

Oh... Well, I guess this is a bust.

ZEKE

Hey, don't count yourself out yet! Just because they're strict doesn't mean you can't do it.

MAX

Nah... maybe I could sell foot pics or something.

ZEKE

(chuckling)

Dude, you don't have to go there quite yet. Unless you're into that. I've got one last place.

ZEKE pulls away.

EXT. MO PIZZA NO PROBLEMS - CONT.

ZEKE pulls into the barren parking lot of the delivery-exclusive pizza shop. He puts the car in park and looks over at MAX bleakly, who is shaking his head.

MAX

No way, man. I can't.

ZEKE

Sure you can. Think about it, this job is made for you.

MAX

No it's not!

ZEKE

Okay, you can't pass a drug test and don't really wanna work,
what better job is there than one that lets you drive around
stoned, listening to music?

MAX

Hmm... Okay, I guess I'll give it a shot.

MAX gets out of the car and walks toward the shop sluggishly.
ZEKE tugs the camera off the dashboard rig and follows him.

INT. MO PIZZA NO PROBLEMS - CONT.

MAX and ZEKE enter the lobby and stand patiently at the counter.
STU, a gruff middle-aged man wearing an extremely faded Mo Pizza
No Problems t-shirt, stands at the front of the store taking an
order and motions for MAX to sit and wait.

STU

(on the phone)

Yes sir, I understand that and I deeply
apologize. If you want we can send you
another order out right now free of charge,
just give the driver your... Yes sir, you
have to... You know what, why don't you go
fuck yourself?

STU slams the phone down into the receiver.

STU

(under breath)

Some people.

STU looks up at MAX and flashes an inviting smile.

STU

Hello, sorry about that! What can I do for
you, sir?

MAX

Uh, I'm actually here to apply for a job.

STU

Oh, perfect! We've actually got open
interviews right now. What's your name,
son?

MAX

Max, sir.

STU
Matt! Nice to meet you buddy, I'm Stu, the
owner.

MAX
Uh, actually, my name is-

STU grasps MAX's hand and shakes it aggressively, interrupting
him. Once he lets go, MAX massages his hand in pain. STU then
notices ZEKE.

STU
And what's this? You makin' some kinda
movie or something?

ZEKE
(O.S.)
Actually, sir, I'm making a documentary
about my buddy here! Would it be alright if
I followed him around for a bit?

STU eyes ZEKE up and down, skeptically.

STU
Hmm. I don't believe you. For all I know,
you could be some government agent here to
spy on me! Isn't hacking our computers
enough!?

ZEKE
(O.S.)
Uh... with all due respect sir, aren't I a
bit young to be a government agent?

STU eyes ZEKE skeptically again.

STU
(grunts)
I suppose...

MAX
Uh, sir... If he's gonna be a problem I can
ju-

STU
Problem!? There's no problem at all, I'm
just messing around with ya!

MAX looks at the camera unamused, then back at STU.

STU
(laughs nervously)
Come on back, let's get you started.

MAX
What about the interview?

STU
Oh yeah! Do you have a car?

MAX
(confused)
Yeah?

STU
Perfect, you're hired! NOW come on back.

STU points to a swinging door to the right of the counter. MAX again makes concerned eye-contact with the camera, then pushes the door open.

FADE TO BLACK.